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The transformation of political party opposition in Malaysia and its implications for the electoral authoritarian regime

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Malaysia's electoral authoritarian system is increasingly coming under pressure. Indicators of this are the metamorphosis of opposition forces since 1998 and, in particular, the results of the 2008 parliamentary elections. From 1957 until 1998 political party opposition was fragmented. An initial transformation of political party opposition began at the height of the Asian financial crisis, after a major conflict within the ruling United Malays National Organization in 1998. However, the regime was able to weaken the opposition, resulting in its poor performance in the 2004 elections. Afterwards, in a second transformation that has continued until the present time, an oppositional People's Alliance (Pakatan Rakyat) has emerged that now has a serious chance of taking over the federal government. This article argues that the increase in the strength and cohesion of political party opposition since 1998 has been caused mainly by five combined factors: the emergence of pro-democratic segments within a multi-ethnic and multi-religious middle class; the intensified interaction of political parties and civil society forces; the impact of new media; the eroded legitimacy of the United Malays National Organization and other parties of the ruling coalition; and the internal reforms within the Islamist Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (Parti Islam SeMalaysia). Consequently it has become conceivable that the country will incrementally democratize in a protracted transition. Although the 1999 and 2008 elections were not foundational, they have been transitional. They may not have inaugurated a new democratic regime, but they have marked important phases in the struggle for democracy in Malaysia.

Keywords: Malaysia; electoral authoritarianism; political parties; reform movement; protracted transition

Introduction

Malaysia has been conceived of as 'semi-democracy', 'syncretist state', or 'repressive-responsive regime'.¹ These terms denote the hybrid character of the regime, located somewhere in the grey zone between democracy and 'full' authoritarianism. With reference to recent debates on various regime types, the country is best understood as a competitive electoral authoritarian regime. These regimes:

neither practice democracy nor resort regularly to naked repression. By organizing periodic elections they try to obtain at least a semblance of democratic legitimacy, hoping to satisfy external as well as internal actors. At the same time, by placing those elections under tight authoritarian controls they try to cement their continued hold on power.²

Elections are inclusive and pluralistic, but not fully competitive and open.³ Such electoral authoritarian regimes differ from electoral democracies with sufficiently free and fair elections and hegemonic electoral authoritarian regimes where elections are not competitive and opposition parties are doomed to lose.⁴ The concept of electoral authoritarianism is used here because any potential transition to democracy in Malaysia will most probably occur primarily in the electoral arena. Mass protests are quickly transferred into the party system. Elections – possibly in combination with party-switching – are competitive enough to allow for a change of government and, then, of regime.

In Malaysia, elections are not fair since basic political rights and civil liberties are restricted.⁵ Limitations to press freedom⁶ and to the right to associate and assemble, malapportionment, gerrymandering, and the financial advantages of the ruling parties are testimony to the systematic violation of fairness principles. In Malaysia the governing coalition – initially the Alliance, and from the early 1970s on the Barisan Nasional (BN) (National Front) – has won every election at the federal level. The Alliance – an inter-ethnic coalition of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) – ran successfully for the first time in the municipal elections of 1952. The BN, the successor to the Alliance founded in the early 1970s, consists of 13 parties, many of which solely or overwhelmingly represent specific ethnic groups; that is, the Malay majority (53.4% of the population), the Chinese and Indian minorities (26.0% and 7.7%, respectively), or the main ethnic groups in East Malaysia.

The dynamics of party politics have changed substantially since 1998, following the Asian financial crisis. Particularly since the 2008 elections, the national political opposition has become more cohesive than ever before. It is led by a charismatic and internationally esteemed former deputy prime minister; it governs in a range of states; it is able to mobilize large segments of civil society; it has disposal over a vibrant alternative media; and it has a chance of taking over the federal government.

According to different variants of modernization theory, Malaysia has many prerequisites for democracy such as a large middle class, a low poverty rate, and long-lasting high economic growth. The country is integrated into the world economy and has favourable colonial legacies, a tradition of peaceful conflict resolution, and a participatory political culture. In addition, it is situated in a region where neighbouring countries have experienced a transition from authoritarianism to electoral democracy. Yet, as has been observed by Przeworski, such 'objective factors constitute at most constraints to that which is possible under a concrete historical situation but do not determine the outcome of such situations'.⁷

A huge part of transition theory has focused more on the strategic choices of actors. In the same vein, Howard and Roessler stress the 'importance of elite strategies and incumbent-opposition dynamics in competitive authoritarian regimes, versus structural factors and prior degrees of political liberalization'.⁸ However, an analysis of the typical 'four-player game' of transition, with hardliners and softliners among regime elites and with radicals and moderates in the opposition,⁹ does not work in Malaysia today. Instead this article argues that the potential transition to democracy in Malaysia will not be paced according to the model as advanced by authors such as O'Donnell and Schmitter. Rather, it will be a 'protracted transition' where 'legal but restrained opposition groups (usually political parties, sometimes in tandem with labour unions, business groups, or other representatives of civil society) debate political liberalization, step by step, strategic interaction by strategic interaction, over the course of years and decades'.¹⁰ The 1999 and 2008 elections, then, have not been foundational, but transitional. They have not inaugurated a new democratic regime, but they have marked a new phase in the struggle for democracy in Malaysia.

Democratization in Malaysia has been blocked for a long time, not only because of repression but also, and especially, because of the inability of opposition forces to cooperate effectively. From independence in 1957 until 1998 the opposition was fragmented and weak. The first transformation of political party opposition began at the height of the Asian financial crisis, after a major conflict within the ruling UMNO in 1998. The emerging *Reformasi* movement ushered in the formation of the Barisan Alternatif (BA) (Alternative Front), an alliance of opposition parties, ahead of the 1999 elections. The regime was subsequently able to fragment and weaken opposition, resulting in its poor performance in the 2004 elections. The movement as a whole was too weak to endure because of an Islamist reversal in the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) (Parti Islam SeMalaysia), the resulting tense relationship between PAS and the Democratic Action Party (DAP), and the regained strength of the UMNO and the BN. The latter was due, in turn, to the economic recovery, the events of 11 September 2001, and the concomitant scapegoating of radical Islam. Afterwards, in a second transformation, the opposition parties overcame their rivalries, while the legitimacy crisis of UMNO and other BN parties reached its peak in 2007/2008. Consequently, an oppositional People's Alliance (Pakatan Rakyat) that is more cohesive than the BA has emerged.

This article argues that the transformation of political party opposition in Malaysia has been caused mainly by five combined factors: the emergence of pro-democratic segments within a multi-ethnic and multi-religious middle class; the intensified interaction of political parties and civil society forces; the impact of new, uncensored media; the erosion of legitimacy of the UMNO-led ruling coalition Barisan Nasional; and internal reforms in the Islamist PAS. The article draws on findings from a three-year project based on more than 50 interviews, primary documents, and participant observation, focusing on events that occurred from 1998 until after the watershed 2008 parliamentary elections.¹¹ Concluding remarks summarize the main findings of the analysis and discuss the wider implications with reference to the role of opposition parties and the inner workings and transformation of electoral authoritarianism.

Political party opposition before *Reformasi*

For a long time, electoral authoritarianism in Malaysia was more hegemonic than competitive in character due to a fragmented and emaciated opposition. Those political parties that tried to break the hegemony of the ruling elites faced severe repression. By the time Malaya gained independence in 1957, a once-strong Communist Party was severely weakened; two smaller socialist parties, the predominantly Malay Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM) (Malaysian People's Party) and the Chinese-dominated Labour Party, merged into the Socialist Front. However, both were unable to win more than eight seats and two seats in the 1959 and 1964 elections, respectively. At the federal level the Alliance was able to sustain its two-thirds majority in the 1959 elections as well as the 1964 elections. PAS, at that time more a Malay nationalist than an Islamist party, won majorities in state parliaments only in the economically backward north. Eventually, the dominance of the Alliance was considerably shaken. In the May 1969 elections it obtained only 74 out of 144 seats at the federal level. The polarization between competing political parties during the election campaign led to ethnic rioting just after the elections in May 1969. As a result, a state of emergency was proclaimed (until 1971) and the Alliance was extended to become the National Front (BN). In order to avoid further ethnic unrest, the BN integrated some smaller parties and even PAS (from 1973 to

1977). The BN won at least 83% of the seats in the national parliament in the elections in 1974, 1978, 1982 and 1986, against an opposition consisting largely of PAS (since 1978) and the social democratic and pre-dominantly Chinese DAP. Practically speaking, these two parties did not cooperate. However, during the mid-1980s a part of the opposition established a loose alliance.¹²

This alliance preceded two coalitions formed in 1990 that were interlinked through Semangat '46, a party that broke away from UMNO in the wake of a major leadership crisis in 1986/87.¹³ One alliance, the Islamic Muslim Unity Movement (Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah), was a coalition of Semangat '46 with PAS. The other, the Malaysian People's Front (Gagasan Rakyat Malaysia), consisted of Semangat '46, the PRM, and the DAP, amongst others. Such an unorthodox construction of two parallel pacts was largely the result of pro-grammatic differences between PAS and the DAP. In 1990 the opposition won 49 out of 180 seats (in 1986, 29 out of 177) (see Table 1). Nevertheless, these alliances ultimately collapsed due to a range of disagreements.¹⁴ Religious and ethnic cleavages complicated the creation of a cohesive coalition. Within the BN, UMNO could use its ethnic cleavages

Table 1. Seats in the national parliament since 1990 (most important parties).

	1990	1995	1999	2004	2008
Barisan Nasional	127	162	148	198	140
UMNO	71	88	72	109	79
MCA	18	30	28	31	15
PBB	10	13	10	11	14
MIC	6	6	7	9	3
Gerakan	5	7	7	10	2
Opposition	49	30	45	20	82
PAS	7	7	27	7	23
PKN (since 2004, PKR)	—	—	5	1	31
DAP	20	9	10	12	28
PBS (since 2002, part of the BN)	14	8	3	a	a
Semangat '46 ^b	8	6	—	—	—
Total	180	192	193	219	222

Note: UMNO, United Malays National Organization; MCA, Malaysian Chinese Association; PBB, United Traditional Bumiputera Party (Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu); MIC, Malaysian Indian Congress; Gerakan (Party Gerakan, Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia); PAS, Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (Parti Islam SeMalaysia); PKN, National Justice Party (Parti Keadilan Nasional) – since 2004, PKR, People's Justice Party (Parti Keadilan Rakyat); DAP, Democratic Action Party; PBS, United Sabah Party (Parti Bersatu Sabah). ^aFour seats for the BN. ^bBreakaway party from the UMNO; most of its members returned to the UMNO in 1996.

Source: Election Commission of Malaysia.

complicated the creation of a cohesive coalition. Within the BN, UMNO could use its unchallenged hegemonic role to settle such conflicts author- itatively. Besides, the government employed an array of propaganda and repressive means to discredit and shatter the opposition. BN member parties profited from an extensive patronage apparatus. However, heavy disputes occurred within the UMNO and the BN as soon as the cash flow came to a halt; for instance, during the economic crises in 1986 and 1998/1999.

Reformasi and the Barisan Alternatif

In 1998 a new opposition force that fundamentally altered the political landscape was created. At that time UMNO and the BN experienced the worst crisis since their inception as the country was hit by the worst economic slump since indepen- dence. Moreover, fundamental socio-economic shifts came to the surface. The new opposition movement was based mainly on a new middle class with a large Malay segment.¹⁵ This new Malay middle class now consisted of managers and professionals working in the private and the state sectors whereas it earlier encompassed mainly schoolteachers and other civil servants.¹⁶ Whereas in 1970 only 4.9% of the professionals were *Bumiputera* ('sons of the soil'), this number increased to 28.9% in 1999.¹⁷ Moreover, ownership of the share capital of limited companies rose considerably among the *Bumiputera* from 2.4% in 1970 to 20.6% in 1995. These *Bumiputera* are officially composed of Malays (approximately five-sixths of the *Bumiputera*) as well as other indigenous groups such as the Dayak, Melanau, Bajau, Kadazandusun, and Murut, who all enjoy constitutionally guaranteed privileges. The implementation of the New Economic Policy and the New Education Policy – that is, 'affirmative action' measures in favour of the *Bumiputera* – in the early 1970s has since caused dissatisfaction not only among the Chinese and Indians, but also among rural Malays who have hardly benefited from the policy shift. Nevertheless, parts of this new middle class de-emphasize ethnicity and religious exclusivism through 'new patterns of ethnoreligious interaction'.¹⁸ One indicator is the improvement of inter-ethnic relations among business elites:

important changes are occurring in the way businesspeople develop their firms, probably due to the impact of generational change. Changes in business strategies, organisational structure and management style within these firms suggest that new generations of ethnic Chinese and Malays, unlike their forebears, appear more inclined to forge inter-ethnic business ties.¹⁹

The state-led liberalization of education and cultural policies has also contributed to 'a new spirit of cooperation and acceptance across ethnic divides'.²⁰ All this has facilitated bonding among ethnic groups that had commonly been divided and was one reason for a rapprochement of opposition groups. It has to be kept in mind, however, that this middle class is fragmented. Particularly those who are dependent on the state still tend to support the BN.²¹

The *Reformasi* movement²² itself was triggered by a controversy between Prime Minister Mahathir and his deputy Anwar Ibrahim. Mahathir identified a western conspiracy as well as currency speculation by George Soros as the causes of the Asian financial crisis. Anwar Ibrahim, in contrast, spoke of self-inflicted problems due to the close linkage of economics and politics. He also held a number of unproductive megaprojects responsible and refused to subsidize the troubled Renong Group as well as the shipping company owned by Mirzan Mahathir, the prime minister's son.²³ While Mahathir rejected help from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, Anwar welcomed International Monetary Fund support and mobilized foreign media in his favour. There are even indications that Anwar and his supporters tried to overthrow Mahathir, his former mentor, as party leader at the UMNO general assembly in June 1998.²⁴ Eventually, Anwar was sacked as finance minister and Mahathir's deputy due to 'moral impropriety'. In the weeks preceding his detention over charges of sodomy and corruption, a new protest movement emerged in solidarity with him.²⁵ The conflict thus spilled onto the streets. After numerous mass protests, never before seen in Malaysia, two alliances were established in September 1998. One was Gagasan Demokrasi Rakyat (shortened form: Gagasan, Coalition for People's Democracy), consisting largely of non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and the other was Gerakan Keadilan Rakyat Malaysia (shortened form: Gerak, Malaysian People's Movement for Justice), which included NGOs as well as the DAP and PAS. In December the Pergerakan Keadilan Sosial (Adil, Movement for Social Justice) was founded. It was led by Anwar's wife, Wan Azizah, and the well-known NGO activist Chandra Muzaffar. They decided to form a political party in order to participate in the coming elections. Adil thus became the Parti Keadilan Nasional (PKN) (or keADILan, National Justice Party) in April 1999. In June the predominantly Malay yet multi-ethnic and multi-religious PKN united with PAS, the DAP, and the PRM to create the Barisan Alternatif.

The *Reformasi* movement altered the country's political culture. Jomo²⁶ describes the transformation as the liberation of the Malaysian, and particularly of Malay political discourse. The movement discovered the Internet as a useful medium that served in exchanging up-to-date information and developing a collective identity.²⁷ More than 50 *Reformasi*-related websites were created (Laman Reformasi, freeMalaysia, and so forth), as were discussion groups such as Sang-kancil. *Malaysiakini* also asserted itself as the first critical and popular daily Internet newspaper. Large parts of the population realized that the state security forces and a judiciary obviously subservient to Mahathir had manipulated the Anwar trial by employing all sorts of questionable methods.

In the lead-up to the November 1999 elections, the opposition experienced an unprecedented political ascent.²⁸ The fact that a social movement was smoothly and quickly transformed into such a party alliance is testimony to the peculiarities of competitive electoral authoritarianism. Incentives for civil society actors and party activists to partake in elections are strong. This means that investing in electoral politics yields higher revenues than merely relying on 'street politics'.

The BA parties were widely regarded as forces of reform (DAP and PKN) or as an Islamist alternative (PAS).²⁹ The PAS stronghold lay in the northern states of Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kedah. The party maintained a closely knit network of religious leaders and Islamic schools, right down to the village level. The PKN was relatively heterogeneous in its composition. The main factions in the party were NGO activists, former UMNO officials around Anwar Ibrahim, and functionaries of the Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement, Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia. The party was mostly based in urban West Malaysian areas and had its following essentially among sections of the middle classes and – to a lesser extent – lower classes. The DAP had been established in 1966 as an offshoot of the Singaporean People's Action Party shortly after the merger of Singapore and Malaya failed. The party gained a strong following, especially in urban areas, among ethnic Chinese dissatisfied with the pro-*Bumiputera* policy and the failures of the MCA.

Political party opposition as well as NGOs are today based on an ethnically and religiously diversified middle class. This has surely contributed to the rapprochement among opposition parties. Within PAS this has created the space for pragmatists who have sought to cooperate with non-Muslims. Thus, prior to the elections in November 1999 the traditional rivalry between PAS and the DAP was of minor importance.³⁰ The joint BA manifesto 'Towards a Just Malaysia' of October 1999 did not contain any Islamist demands by the PAS and all parties agreed on a very liberal agenda. They demanded that the draconian Internal Security Act be abolished, and campaigned for freedom of the press. Generally, they criticized not only Mahathir and the BN but also the demise of an erstwhile independent judiciary, the incapacity of the police to guarantee internal security, the failures of

the anti-corruption agency, and the partisan press. The manifesto emphasized the fight against poverty, corruption, and abuse of authority. Furthermore, there was a strong desire for increased inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue.

During the election campaign PAS did not focus on its Islamist agenda and in general attracted more people at its public gatherings (*ceramah*) than the UMNO. Similarly to its coalition partners, PAS criticized Mahathir's government for its authoritarianism and corruption. The BN, on the other hand, tried to discredit PAS, just like during previous elections, as a dangerous Islamist party, and used the mainstream media to highlight controversial comments by PAS politicians. The DAP was in a predicament since it was fighting UMNO as well as PAS as far as the Islamization of Malaysia was concerned. Lastly, the collective protest against UMNO and Mahathir's abuse of power, or the 'Anwar factor', was responsible for the relative success of the BA.

The BN attained only one-half of the Malay votes. It achieved 148 out of 193 seats in the national parliament while the BA garnered 42 seats (PAS, 27 seats; DAP, 10 seats; PKN, five seats) and the Parti Bersatu Sabah only three seats (see Table 1). BN hegemony was most intense in the Borneo states Sabah and Sarawak and in the south of the peninsula (Johore, Negeri Sembilan, Selangor). Due to the great decline in Malay votes, the number of UMNO seats decreased from 88 (1995) to 72 (1999). The good results of the MCA offset some of the losses, but BN votes still fell from 65% to 56%, and for the first time since 1959 UMNO won fewer votes than its coalition partners combined. The party did particularly poorly amongst orthodox Muslims. Funston³¹ thus speaks of a total defeat by *ulama* (Islamic scholars) close to UMNO that can be viewed as a result of frustration with the official version of Islam. The overall weight of the party within the BN sank. Ever since, Mahathir has had to rely more on the support of ethnic minorities.

PAS won 27 seats (in 1995, seven seats) in the Dewan Rakyat, the national parliament, and majorities in the state parliaments of Kelantan and Terengganu. In all states combined it captured 98 out of 113 BA seats, while in 1995 it had only managed to acquire 34 in these parliaments. The other BA coalition partners could not reach their goals: the DAP obtained only 10 seats, the PKN five seats, and the PRM none at all. The DAP, which had won 20 seats in 1990, profited least from the alliance with PAS and the PKN. Evidently, many Chinese supported the MCA instead since they feared PAS and its Islamist views. The results for the PKN came as a disappointment to many of its supporters. These were not surprising, however, bearing in mind that the party had only had a few months to set up its organizational machinery.

The 1999 elections were – seen from the perspective of the ruling elites – a perfect device for defusing discontent. This phenomenon in protracted transitions is described by Eisenstadt:

the channelling of opposition into the electoral arena served the authoritarian incumbent by getting strikers, students, and other potentially disruptive trouble makers 'off the regime's back', and out of the unpredictable realm of street demonstrations and picket lines and into the highly regulated realm of campaigns and elections.³²

The polls were not a major breakthrough for the opposition, in particular the DAP and the PKN. The DAP realized that the uneasy relationship with PAS was costly in the face of a Chinese electorate that feared ongoing Islamization. Yet, the elections proved wrong those who surmised that electoral authoritarianism in Malaysia was too entrenched to allow the opposition to undercut BN hegemony. This BN predominance suffered a major blow. UMNO's legitimacy, already undermined by the abuses of the New Economic Policy, was decisively shaken by the Anwar affair. According to Brownlee,³³ ruling parties such as UMNO usually mediate conflict and generate political influence that reduces individual insecurity. Moreover, they 'create a structure for collective agenda setting, lengthening the time horizon on which leaders weigh gains and losses'.³⁴ These ruling parties generate incentives for long-term loyalty, and they decrease intra-elite factionalism. But as of 1998/1999 UMNO was no longer an example of a ruling party that stabilized the regime – the conflict in the same year was never really solved. After the sacking and incarceration of Anwar Ibrahim in 1998, the hegemony of the BN was questioned. Supported by the vibrant Internet media and backed by parts of the middle class, a new form of cooperation between political parties and civil society actors came into being. The seeds were sown for an opposition movement unprecedented in Malaysia's history. The *Reformasi* movement and the 1999 elections could thus be seen as the first phase in a protracted transition and a part of the 'continuous and prolonged struggle over the formal institutional playing field'.³⁵ The main condition necessary for producing an enduring alliance was still missing. The PAS–DAP coalition that was already characterized by major political differences was too brittle to withstand the typical onslaught of authoritarianism – sheer state repression. Accordingly, the BA started to slowly dissolve not long after the polls. In January 2000 Karpal Singh (DAP vice chairman), Marina Yusof (PKN vice chairwoman), Ezam Noor (leader of the PKN Youth), Zulkifli Sulong (*Harakah* editor), and others were arrested under the Sedition Act or the Official Secrets Act. Then, public rallies were banned in Kuala Lumpur, among other places. PAS was only allowed to publish the biweekly *Harakah* twice a month. The licences of three monthlies, *Detik*, *Wasilah*, and *Tamaddun*, were not renewed under the restrictive Printing Presses and

Publications Act. Meanwhile, the show trial against Anwar Ibrahim continued. In August 2000 he was sentenced to nine years in prison for 'sexual misconduct'. In early November 2000 the BA attempted to hold a rally north of Kuala Lumpur, at which 100,000 participants were expected, yet most demonstrators did not reach the venue owing to numerous road blocks and the use of tear gas and batons. This incident at Kesas Highway³⁶ and, also, the surprising success in November in the Lunas (Kedah) by-elections³⁷ demonstrated that the BA was still able to mobilize the masses, but soon after it began to disintegrate.

The dissolution of the Barisan Alternatif

In the following years the BA broke apart due to state repression, an international political environment advantageous for the BN, and a recovering economy. One of the main reason was the tactical miscalculation of some PAS leaders. This break-down also has to be evaluated against the background of a strained relationship with the DAP.

In April 2001, 10 more PKN members, who had allegedly planned to overthrow the government, were arrested. In July the ban on political rallies was extended to *ceramah*. In August 10 more people were detained; most of them were PAS members, including Nik Adli, the son of Kelantan chief minister Nik Aziz, and they were accused of belonging to the terrorist group Kumpulan Mujahedin Malaysia (Mujahedin Group Malaysia). All of these repressive measures prevented the opposition from consolidating. The PKN party leadership operated virtually on the edge of illegality, even more so than its coalition partners.³⁸

After 11 September 2001 the campaign against PAS was reinforced. When the DAP left the alliance because of the intransigent Islamist attitude of PAS, the BA shattered altogether. Mahathir intensified Malaysia's collaboration with the United States and legitimized his actions against the opposition as part of the 'war on terror'. He depicted PAS as a fundamentalist group and implicated a link between the party and terrorist networks. On 29 September 2001, shortly after the DAP had left the BA, he declared that Malaysia was already an Islamic state in order to take the wind out of PAS Islamists' sails. Although the prime minister may have had a moderate form of Islam in mind (without *hudud*³⁹ punishments and with explicit toleration of other religions), his remarks came as a shock to the Chinese and the Indians.⁴⁰ Islam was the state religion, yet Malaysia had by no means ever been an Islamic state. Therefore, the DAP started the nationwide 'no to 911, no to 929' campaign and demanded that Mahathir retract his statement.

PAS slowly began to distance itself from the BA *Common Manifesto* of 1999. The party decided to introduce a particularly reactionary form of the Islamic penal code in Terengganu.⁴¹ The PAS reaction to Mahathir's statement of 29 September 2001 came on 12 November 2003, with the publication of a blueprint for an Islamic state. The 53-page 'Dokumen Negara Islam' ('The Islamic State Document') had been announced some time previously. It had been written under the auspices of the party's purists and was published in the face of the resistance of pragmatists such as Hatta Ramli, Nasharuddin Mat Isa, and Solahuddin.⁴² In the document, *shari'a* (Islamic religious law) signifies the highest legal system and also the main inspiration for all state activity. Its introduction is meant to purify the entire society.

The document roughly depicts the major goals and characteristics of an Islamic state.

Leading politicians from the other opposition parties criticized the document. The PKN was very concerned about its publication; the DAP considered its fears confirmed, and the party's secretary general publicly announced that the DAP would withdraw from all official posts in Kelantan and Terengganu, the two states controlled by PAS. Accordingly, prior to the elections in March 2004, political party opposition reached one of its lowest points due to the split with the DAP, the controversy about terrorist dangers in Southeast Asia, and the 'Dokumen Negara Islam'. In contrast, the BN was much more cohesive. The government was able to present impressive economic successes and had also regained some popularity with its new prime minister, Abdullah Badawi, who had taken office in 2003. UMNO's 2004 elections success was to a large extent due to the widespread endorsement of its new leader who represented a moderate form of Islam, vowed to fight corruption and had a reputation of being far more conciliatory than his predecessor Mahathir.

Thus, in the 2004 elections, the BN received 64.4% of the votes and secured 198 out of 219 seats in the national parliament and 505 out of 552 seats at the state level (see Table 1).⁴³ UMNO won 93.2% of the seats it had fought for (109 out of 117); in 1999 it had won merely 48.6%. In most state parliaments, opposition barely existed anymore. In nine of these parliaments only two opposition representatives remained. Especially in East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak), the BN had almost asserted a political monopoly. Pre-*Reformasi* conditions were thus re-established. PAS was represented by only seven MPs and had lost its majority in Terengganu. The DAP was able to recover but did not repeat its 1990 success with 20 seats. The biggest losses were undoubtedly sustained by PAS and the Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) (People's Justice Party), the product of a fusion of the PKN and the socialist PRM, which won only in one constituency.

All in all, the fragile cooperation between PAS and the DAP dissolved quickly because of heavy-handed

manoeuvres by PAS purists and the Machiavellian politics of Mahathir. Moreover, UMNO's legitimacy was restored due to a stabilized economy; the widespread belief – after 11 September, 2001 – in a serious Islamist threat posed by PAS conservatives; and – after 2003 – the popularity of a soft-spoken, moderate prime minister, Abdullah Badawi.

Transformation since 2004

After the 2004 elections, then, the opposition was in shambles and the *Reformasi* movement seemed to have run out of steam. Nonetheless, the opposition parties would be able to reconstitute itself within a few years. The more they have sensed the opportunity to undermine the ruling coalition, the more they have tended to cooperate. As long as the opposition is divided, the weaknesses of the ruling coalition do not weigh heavily. But if political party opposition is transformed, this can have enormous consequences, and 'they can dramatically reduce the survival of an authoritarian regime and influence its transition to democracy'.⁴⁴

This process commenced with the unexpected release of Anwar Ibrahim in September 2004. He quickly became the opposition leader. In December 2004 the PKR assembly in Ipoh turned out to be the new beginning of a party that had suffered from paralysing factionalism in its early years. The influence of a group of ABIM activists was decisively weakened.⁴⁵

In parallel to this process, PAS began to soften its stance and sought rapprochement with the PKR and the DAP. Based on the party's success in the 1999 elections, the purists within the PAS leadership such as Abdul Hadi Awang had believed they could increase their influence and even win majorities in the states of Kedah and Perlis by stressing an Islamist agenda. However, the results of the 2004 elections had demonstrated that not only the religious minorities but also the majority of Malay voters did not endorse plans either to introduce the *hudud* or to establish an Islamic state. Therefore, at the party congress in August 2004 President Abdul Hadi Awang, a conservative *ulama*, was openly criticized.⁴⁶ As a result of such criticism, aimed at the entire *ulama* faction, another special, non-public party assembly was held in December of that year.⁴⁷ The subject of discussion was the confidential 'post-mortem report', a detailed analysis of the defeat in the elections that had been compiled by a special commission. One month later PAS publicly, and unexpectedly, announced that it would tone down the Islamic-state issue. The party was willing to re-address the compromise that had been agreed upon in 1999 and expressed in the BA manifesto. Furthermore, reformers seized important positions in the party elections in 2005 and 2007. In 2007 Nasharuddin Mat Isa won against the conservative *ulama* Harun Taib and, thus, had his post as deputy president confirmed. Husam Musa and Mohamad Sabu were elected as vice presidents. New recruitment patterns and voter bases contributed to this rise of reformist politicians within PAS. Many professionals have only recently joined the party and have increasingly challenged *ulama* orthodoxy.⁴⁸

Reforms within PAS and the moderating influence of Anwar led to a convergence of the opposition partners.⁴⁹ The DAP tried to cooperate with other opposition parties without forging formalized alliances. In contrast to the case in the 1980s and 1990s, the PKR was able to bridge the divide separating the secularism of the DAP and the Islamism of PAS. Anwar Ibrahim embodied a moderate form of orthodox Islam as well as a commitment to multi-ethnicity and multi-religiosity. The DAP and PAS, therefore, were willing to work together informally.⁵⁰

Parallel to this rapprochement among the opposition parties, the mobilization of civil society actors resulted in a political revival that reminded observers of the *Reformasi* movement of 1998/1999. On 10 November 2007 at least 30,000 people demonstrated in Kuala Lumpur.⁵¹ The prohibited protest was organized by Bersih – the 'Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections' (Gabungan Pilihanraya Bersih dan Adil), an alliance comprising 70 political parties and non-governmental organizations, among them the PKR, the DAP, PAS, and the Malaysian Trade Union Congress as well as various human rights organizations. These protests in particular were part of what Schedler describes as a two-level game typical of electoral authoritarian systems. The 'game of electoral competition and the meta-game of electoral reform unfold in a simultaneous as well as interactive fashion'.⁵² The opposition parties thus used the legitimate public debate on election laws to highlight the obvious manipulations undertaken by the ruling coalition.

Another huge protest rally took place on 25 November 2007; 10,000–30,000 people gathered in Kuala Lumpur under the banner of the Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf). The organization speaks out against the perceived discrimination and marginalization of the Indian Hindu minority. It articulates the Hindu community's disillusion with both pro-*Bumiputera* policies and UMNO's rhetoric of *Ketuanan Melayu* (Malay supremacy). The protests were triggered *inter alia* by temple demolitions in the preceding months.

The Bersih and the Hindraf protests, where the police used tear gas and water cannons against the demonstrators, were to a large extent organized via and amplified by new media such as YouTube, *Malaysiakini*; blogs, such as those by Jeff Ooi, Ronnie Liu, and Ahirudin Attan;⁵³ and the independent news portal 'Malaysia today', run by Raja Petra Kamaruddin.⁵⁴

These media have become a key means for opposition groups to disseminate information. Moreover, there are now many social networking websites and fora that circumvent the official media. In 1999, according to Abbott, the Internet 'provided an important catalytic impact on critical social voices in Malaysia' and 'facilitated greater communication and cooperation between disparate groups in civil society, and . . . across ethnic lines'.⁵⁵ In 2000, there were 3.7 million Internet users in the country. As of 2008 this figure has risen to 14 million with a 60% penetration rate.⁵⁶ During election night on 8 March 2008, *Malaysiakini* had over half a million visitors an hour. Even in rural areas, printouts of the opposition's online information, updated daily, were distributed.⁵⁷ Although the Internet is overwhelmingly an urban middle-class phenomenon, '[t]he reality is that kampong folk and those in rural areas now have kith and kin who have moved to the towns and cities. And like a bad review of a restaurant that multiplies itself effortlessly by word or mouth, unflattering information, true or false, travels even faster with cyberworld denizens, who then spread the word outside it'.⁵⁸

Efforts by the BN to confine the new Internet freedom have been mostly in vain. Examples include the confiscation of *Malaysiakini*'s computers in 2003 and the suing of two bloggers by the *New Straits Times* for defamation in 2007. Acts such as these have tended to increase solidarity among Internet community activists. In addition, the Communications and Multimedia Act of 1998, which is part of the Malaysian attempt to transform the country into a regional centre for information and communication technology, guarantees free data traffic.⁵⁹ Today it is much harder for the government to heavily-handedly repress opposition than in the 1970s or 1980s.

A range of scandals implicating high-ranking officials and top politicians have been highlighted recently. One telling example is the so-called Lingam tape, which was shot with a camera-equipped mobile phone. It lays bare how major appointments in the judiciary are decided upon. The affair led to a 'Walk of Justice' through Putrajaya on 26 September 2007 by 2000 lawyers and supporters. The government eventually set up a fact-finding commission to ease pressure ahead of the elections.⁶⁰ Another example of the impact of the Internet on street protests and on politics is the electoral nomination of bloggers without political experience. One of the most prominent among them, Jeff Ooi, is now member of parliament for the DAP.

Even former prime minister Mahathir discovered the new media. A few times he spoke exclusively to *Malaysiakini*, seeing the Internet as an ideal forum to express his growing criticism of his successor and the governing coalition. In August 2006 he demanded Badawi's resignation and thus further undermined Badawi's position, which was already impaired due to the lack of political reforms made.⁶¹

The 2008 elections and the Pakatan Rakyat

In the lead-up to the March 2008 elections, the whole complex of new media, mobilized civil society forces, and closely cooperating opposition parties produced, for the second time after 1998, an enormous reform momentum. At the same time, the legitimacy of the BN, especially of the MCA, the MIC and Gerakan, was at its nadir. A survey by the Merdeka Centre in January 2008, for example, demonstrated that only 38% of the Indians and 42% of the Chinese were satisfied with the performance of Abdullah Badawi.⁶² This was a steep decline in comparison with approval rates a few months earlier.

In February 2008 the opposition agreed on nominating only one candidate per constituency from within their ranks. Moreover, PAS avoided discussions on the *shari'a*-based penal code and the Islamic state issue. Because of the conjunction of all these factors, and despite the usual electoral manipulations, the BN lost its majority in West Malaysia (49.8%). UMNO, the MCA, and the MIC all suffered huge losses (see Table 1).⁶³ The MIC defended only three out of nine Dewan Rakyat seats and six out of 19 seats in state parliaments. Gerakan lost all its seats in its stronghold Penang, where it had governed continuously since 1969. The party achieved merely two seats at the federal level compared with the 10 seats in 2004. The MCA also suffered a resounding defeat and fell from 31 seats in 2004 to 15 seats in 2008. At the state level they lost in 59 out of 90 constituencies. These routs of the Chinese parties were ascribed to disappointment over the weak position of Gerakan and the MCA in relation to UMNO within the ruling coalition and as protest votes against Malay chauvinism and the corruption of the BN parties.⁶⁴

The BN garnered 51% of the votes and 63% of the seats at the federal level, with particularly clear majorities in Johor, UMNO's power base, and the East Malaysian states of Sarawak and Sabah, where it won in 30 out of 31 and 24 out of 25 constituencies, respectively, for the national parliament. The opposition won 82 seats in the national parliament and, what is more important, majorities in five of 13 states. They gained 22 out of 36 seats (PAS, 16 seats; PKR, five seats; DAP, one seat) in Kedah, 39 out of 45 (PAS, 38 seats; PKR, one seat) in Kelantan, 29 out of 40 (DAP, 19 seats; PKR, nine seats; PAS, one seat) in Penang, 31 out of 59 (DAP, 18 seats; PKR, seven seats; PAS, six seats) in Perak, and 36 out of 56 (PKR, 15 seats; DAP, 13 seats; PAS, eight seats) in Selangor.

In contrast to the 2004 elections, this time opposition parties were particularly successful in constituencies with a heterogeneous ethnic composition (*mixed seats*) because ethnic minorities turned away from the BN. According to Ong,⁶⁵ 58% of the Malays but only 35% of the Chinese and 48% of the Indians voted for BN candidates in

Peninsular Malaysia. The swing from the BN towards the opposition amounted to five percentage points among Malays, 30 percentage points among the Chinese and 35 percentage points among the Indians.⁶⁶ Particularly among the latter group, there has been a decisive change of mood. This has been demonstrated, for example, by the endorsement of Anwar Ibrahim: 51% of the Malaysians but 90% of the Indians agreed more or less with the statement that Anwar is a strong and visionary leader.⁶⁷ The Indian vote was one of the main differences in comparison with the 1999 elections. The Hindraf protests a few months prior to the elections marked the first time that this Indian resentment was forcefully articulated. This was the clearest sign of the BN legitimacy crisis. It was also interpreted as a protest vote against the pro-*Bumiputera* policy and the perceived marginalization of the Indians.

Owing to the devastating results, some of the BN party leaders such as Samy Vellu (MIC) and Koh Tsu Koon (Gerakan) have come under enormous pressure. MCA president Ong Ka Ting was replaced in October 2008 by Ong Tee Keat. Even Abdullah Badawi was openly criticized within his own party.⁶⁸ Since the criticism did not die away, Badawi eventually declared, in October, his intended resignation as of UMNO general assembly in March 2009, where he made way for his deputy, Najib Razak. Yet, Najib himself is vulnerable due to rumours about his involvement in a range of corruption scandals and the murder of the Mongolian model Altantuya.⁶⁹

The sensational results have vindicated the strategy of PAS pragmatists. Obviously, the entire opposition – politicians as well as many voters – has learned from past experiences. On 1 April 2008, PAS, the DAP, and the PKR formed the Pakatan Rakyat (People's Alliance), a formalized alliance. The opposition now has the opportunity to demonstrate good governance and to reintroduce local elections in Kedah, Kelantan, Penang, Perak, and Selangor. Since the BN has lost its two-thirds majority, the opposition is also able to block constitutional amendments.⁷⁰ Moreover, the Pakatan Rakyat can now provide ample jobs for party officials and patronage possibilities for the party rank and file.⁷¹

Political transitions are highly contingent political processes in which 'the dynamics of opposition groups and the degree to which they coalesce can be viewed as a tipping game'.⁷² This is illustrated by the sudden change of mood by Chinese and, especially, Indian voters and by the possibility of widespread party-switching. For a few months, until September 2008, the Pakatan Rakyat intended to convince 30 members of parliament to defect from the ruling coalition to the opposition. One way to entice members of parliament from Sarawak and Sabah, two economically backward states in East Malaysia, was to promise to raise oil/ gas revenues for these states from the present 5% to 20% should the Pakatan Rakyat form the government in Kuala Lumpur. Another lure was the promise to appoint members of indigenous ethnic groups such as the Iban and the Kadazandusun to the highest executive positions.⁷³ Political transitions can be understood as the 'rapid movement from one power equilibrium to another, in the course of which a majority of political forces moves from one coalition to another. The incumbent had a winning majority but loses it, thanks to defections of key elements to the opposition'.⁷⁴ Yet, it has turned out that the risks of defecting are still too high for MPs.

Transitions are times of uncertainty, yet the incentives for opposition parties to cooperate are high. The change of government in several states has increased the necessity of the opposition coming to terms with each other. It has also entailed a certain decentralization within the three parties.⁷⁵ In PAS, the focus on the traditional stronghold in the northern part of the peninsula has been widened. Arguably, this strengthens the position of the predominantly Kuala Lumpur-based and Selangor-based pragmatist professionals.

Concluding remarks

Since contention in electoral authoritarian systems centres on the electoral arena, political parties occupy a strategic position. In particular, the creation of a multi-party coalition can affect the electoral dynamic tremendously and may cause 'liberalizing electoral outcomes which provide at least a chance for a new beginning in each of these countries. In fact, many of them liberalize to the point that they can eventually be considered electoral democracies'.⁷⁶

Yet, political party opposition in Malaysia after independence was weak and fragmented for more than 40 years, and only since 1998 has the opposition transformed into a strong and reasonably cohesive alliance. Even then the first coalition, the BA, did not endure, and crumbled after a few years due to internal rifts combined with repressive measures on the part of the state apparatus. However, the second coalition, the People's Alliance (Pakatan Rakyat), which emerged shortly after the 2008 elections, seems to have learned from past mistakes and is today more threatening to the ruling elite than the BA ever was. Before 1998 non-competitive elections and multipartyism were effective instruments for stabilizing the regime, with elections merely 'a safety valve for regulating societal discontent and confining the opposition'.⁷⁷ But today an efficient political party opposition has significantly stirred up the electoral authoritarian arrangements.

The analysis offered here has illustrated that five factors have led to the metamorphosis of political party

opposition in Malaysia. These combined factors are: the emergence of pro-democratic segments within a multi-ethnic and multi-religious middle class; the widespread interaction of political parties and civil society forces, which has spawned unprecedented protest, particularly in 1998/1999 and 2007; the extraordinary impact of new media such as Internet newspapers, blogs, forums, and so forth, on the formation of common ideas and strategies within the *Reformasi* movement; the eroded legitimacy of the BN; and the much-increased influence of pragmatists on decision-making within the Islamist PAS.

Whereas the transformation within the middle class and the shifts in the media sector (and, partly, the stimulation of civil society forces) are consequences of long-term structural change, PAS reforms and the BN's legitimacy crisis are, in turn, effects of actors' strategic choices or of short-term developments. The opposition has been able to challenge the regime only because the legitimacy of the ruling parties rests on the permission of a limited amount of political contestation. This has enabled the opposition to destabilize the normal equilibrium of control and competition maintained by the regime. Previously, the ruling elites have been capable of restoring this equilibrium through a combination of cunning manipulation and sheer repression, yet today in Malaysia these measures are tending to make matters worse. The opportunity structures for collective contention are different now compared with the pre-*Reformasi* era. The *Reformasi* movement and the Bersih and Hindraf protests elicited a forceful response by the regime because of the imminent elections. There has been a clear linkage between street protests, government repression and the mobilization of opposition voters by political parties. This mobilization was strongly facilitated by the adroit use of new media. Moreover, the much-widened political opportunities for parties after 1998 have slowly brought together the DAP, the PKR and PAS into the Pakatan Rakyat alliance.

The *Reformasi* movement and the 1999 elections reshaped the configuration of forces and, since then, Malaysian politics has changed. But the elections also demonstrated the power of the BN. The regime was under pressure, but, because of the typical restraints of electoral authoritarianism, political party opposition was still far removed from taking over power. This disillusionment may have contributed to the dissolution of the BA and the devastating results in the 2004 elections. Only after that disaster did opposition parties, especially PAS, start to change their strategies. In the next elections, in March 2008, they competed with the BN parties from a much stronger position. The elections in 1999 and 2008 were transitional, not foundational, since they were part of an extended and ongoing series of interactions between the state (or the BN) and the opposition.

In this vein, Howard and Roessler state that an electoral authoritarian system

rests on a paradox: it is stable as long as the incumbent is capable of controlling the electoral process, yet inherently unstable since regularly held elections provide a significant opportunity for opposition movements to effectively challenge authoritarian incumbents. In other words, major political change is never certain, but it is often possible.

And while incumbents have become deft at securing reelection, opposition movements can and do sometimes overcome the fundamentally flawed process.⁷⁸

Therefore, in many cases, multiparty elections stabilize electoral authoritarian regimes – but sometimes they produce unintended results. Strong opposition by political parties may raise the awareness of the wider public that regime change is possible. It may also entail a splitting of regime elites. The ruling coalition can lose cohesion, and cracks lead to visible strife. Yet, any such transition in Malaysia is thus far proceeding only slowly because the BN is still too cohesive and has too many vested interests to allow a comprehensive elite desertion or a split between hardliners and softliners. So far, there has been no major split among regime elites,⁷⁹ with only minor defections from the ruling alliance. For instance, *de facto* law minister Zaid Ibrahim resigned in September 2008 in protest over the use of the Internal Security Act,⁸⁰ and the Sabah Progressive Party left the BN a few months after the 2008 elections. But such incidents do not unduly threaten the current regime coalition, and its viability was also demonstrated by developments in Perak in February 2009, where the BN took over the state government after the defection of four BA assemblymen.

There are also other caveats that limit the likelihood of regime change. The Pakatan Rakyat alliance is still fragile, with the relationship between PAS and the DAP being particularly tense. At times, the DAP has gained electoral support precisely by keeping its distance from PAS, while PAS itself could easily revert to purist Islamism. Even the track record of Anwar Ibrahim, formerly part of the Mahathir regime, remains dubious to many in the opposition.⁸¹

Thus the future is uncertain. On the one hand, it remains possible that the BN will be able to restore its hegemony, as it did in the 2001–2004 period. On the other hand, if the BN splits and enough parliamentarians switch to the opposition, a quick takeover is conceivable. Moreover, next time around the opposition could win in 'stunning elections',⁸² yet the BN could conceivably then try to 'steal' these elections. This may entail a new round of government repression and a showdown between regime and opposition. A regime under pressure can resort to violence and dirty tricks, thus losing legitimacy and propelling a self-destructive dynamic of protest and repression. The more the regime may try to subdue opposition, the more it is likely to lose legitimacy.⁸³

At this point in time it seems most probable that Malaysia will democratize incrementally through several transitional, not foundational, elections. This process is likely to be accompanied by a successive empowerment of civil society and political party opposition. Hence a protracted transition is the most likely scenario.

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Notes

1. See Case, *Politics in Southeast Asia*; Jesudason, 'The Syncretic State'; and Crouch, *Government & Society in Malaysia*, respectively.
2. Schedler, 'Elections Without Democracy', 36f. See also Levitsky and Way, 'Elections Without Democracy'.
3. Schedler, 'The Logic of Electoral Authoritarianism', 3.
4. Schedler, 'Elections Without Democracy', 47.
5. Case, 'How do Rulers Control the Electoral Arena?'.
6. Mohd Azizuddin, 'Media Freedom in Malaysia'.
7. Przeworski, 'Some Problems', 48.
8. Howard and Roessler, 'Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes', 380.
9. O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*.
10. Eisenstadt, 'Eddies in the Third Wave', 6.
11. The research for this article was funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft).
12. Brown, 'The Enemy of My Enemy?', 98.
13. On the UMNO leadership crisis, see Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, 143ff.
14. Brown, 'The Enemy of My Enemy?', 101; Weiss, *Protest and Possibilities*, 107ff.
15. Weiss, *Protest and Possibilities*, 188.
16. Embong, 'The Culture and Practice of Pluralism'.
17. Lee, 'Development Policies', 41.
18. Embong, 'Culture and Practice of Pluralism', 61.
19. Gomez, 'Ethnicity, Equity and Conflict', 56.
20. Ibid. See also Saravanamuttu, 'Is there a Politics?'.
21. According to Loh, there are still large segments that are more oriented towards a political culture of 'developmentalism', which comprises consumerist habits and a penchant for political stability that may be guaranteed by authoritarian means. See Loh, 'Developmentalism', 21.
22. On *Reformasi*, see Hilley, *Malaysia*; Khoo, *Beyond Mahathir*.
23. Funston, 'Malaysia's Tenth Elections', 25ff; Jomo, *Malaysian Eclipse*.
24. Khoo, *Beyond Mahathir*, 81.
25. Marzuki, 'Legal Coercion', 35ff.
26. Jomo, 'Acknowledgements', xviii.
27. Abbott, 'The Internet, *Reformasi* and Democratisation'.
28. According to PAS, its membership rose from 500,000 to 700,000 and the circulation of the party bulletin *Harakah* increased from 65,000 to 300,000.
29. On BA parties, see Khoo, *Beyond Mahathir*, 134–59.
30. On the elections, see Funston, 'Malaysia's Tenth Elections'; Loh and Saravanamuttu (eds), *New Politics in Malaysia*; Khoo, *Beyond Mahathir*, 112ff.
31. Funston, 'Malaysia's Tenth Elections', 55.
32. Eisenstadt, 'Eddies in the Third Wave', 15.
33. Brownlee, *Authoritarianism*.
34. Ibid., 12.
35. Eisenstadt, 'Eddies in the Third Wave', 4.
36. *Reformasi* supporters were blocked by the police from proceeding to a '100,000 People's Gathering' in Klang. As a result, Wan Azizah gave a speech in front of a crowd at KESAS Highway (*Malaysiakini*, January 3, 2001).
37. The Barisan Alternatif wrested the Lunas state seat from Barisan Nasional by a margin of 530 votes. Saifuddin Nasution won against MIC's S Anthonysamy (*Malaysiakini*, November 30, 2000).
38. Especially on developments from 1999 until 2002, see Welsh, 'Real Change?'. Interview with Syed Husin Ali (PKR), Kuala Lumpur, November 15, 2004.
39. '*Hudud*' usually refers to the class of punishments (capital punishments, amputation of hands or feet, and flogging) that are fixed for certain crimes such as drinking alcohol, theft, robbery, illegal sexual intercourse, rebellion, and apostasy (including blasphemy).
40. Interviews with Tian Chua (PKR), Kuala Lumpur, August 12, 2004; and Syed Husin Ali (PKR), Kuala Lumpur, August 17, 2004.
41. This code, however, was never implemented due to the expected intervention by the federal government.
42. On the entire issue, which included an intense intra-party debate, see Liew, 'PAS Politics'. Interviews with Nasharuddin Mat Isa (PAS), Kuala Lumpur, November 23, 2004; Solahuddin Ayoob (PAS), Kuala Lumpur, September 20, 2004; and Mohammad Hatta Ramli (PAS), Kuala Lumpur, September 24, 2004 – who even pondered establishing a new party. Nasharuddin openly questioned the usefulness of the Islamic State document. Solahuddin advocated an opening of the party, for instance, with 'alternative entertainment' events (that is, for example, rock concerts with gender segregation).
43. Lim and Ong, 'The 2004 General Election'.

44. Lai and Melkonian-Hoover, 'Democratic Progress and Regress', 562.
45. Informal conversations at the PKR assembly. See also Joceline Tan, 'Bumpy road ahead for PKR', *The Star*, 24 January 2005.
46. On the following see Liew, 'PAS Leadership'; Thirkell-White, 'Political Islam and Malaysian Democracy', 436ff. Also informal conversations at the party congress.
47. Interview with Nasharuddin Mat Isa (PAS), Kuala Lumpur, November 23, 2004.
48. Interview with Ahmad Samsuri Mokhtar (PAS), Kuala Lumpur, August 7, 2008; and Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad (PKR), Shah Alam, August 14, 2008.
49. The DAP and the PAS still very often need Anwar as mediator – interviews with Din Merican (PKR), Petaling Jaya, August 13, 2008; Ahmad Samsuri Mokhtar (PAS), Kuala Lumpur, August 7, 2008; Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad (PKR), Shah Alam, August 14, 2008; and Tony Pua (DAP), Kuala Lumpur, August 14, 2008. Anwar is able to bridge the divide because of his Islamic and *Reformasi* credentials.
50. The benefits of this collaboration became evident in the Sarawak state elections in May 2006.
51. *Malaysiakini*, November 12, 2007; *The Star*, November 12, 2007.
52. Schedler, 'The Nested Game', 110.
53. George, 'Media in Malaysia', 906ff.
54. Wong, 'Kingmaker Web 2.0', 240f. See also George, 'The Internet's Political Impact'.
55. Abbott, 'Internet, *Reformasi* and Democratisation', 98.
56. *New Straits Times*, March 14, 2008.
57. Interview with Ahmad Samsuri Mokhtar (PAS), Kuala Lumpur, August 7, 2008. Moreover, *Malaysiakini*'s Internet-streamed television programmes were copied on VCDs; see Tan and Zawawi, *Blogging and Democratization in Malaysia*, 86.
58. *New Straits Times*, March 14, 2008. According to Raja Petra Kamaruddin, the most important role of the Internet during the recent election has been to cure 'the apathy of the middle class' and motivate them to vote; quoted after Tan and Zawawi, *Blogging and Democratization in Malaysia*, 86.
59. *The Economist*, March 13, 2008. The Internet was largely unchecked in order to encourage foreign investment in the Multimedia Super Corridor launched on 1 August 1996; see Abbott, 'Internet, *Reformasi* and Democratisation', 82f.
60. *Malaysiakini*, September 19, 2007; September 27, 2007; and October 29, 2007.
61. On this, see Pepinsky, 'Malaysia: Turnover Without Change'.
62. *International Herald Tribune*, January 31, 2008.
63. Ufen, '2008 Elections in Malaysia'. Tan and Lee (eds), *Political Tsunami*.
64. Ufen, '2008 Elections in Malaysia'. Ong, 'Making Sense of the Political Tsunami'.
65. Ong, 'Making Sense of the Political Tsunami'.
66. According to Brown ('Federal and State Elections', 743), the estimated swing to opposition parties in West Malaysia was 58.5% among Indians and 21.7% among Chinese voters; 4.6% of Malay voters switched their support to the opposition.
67. Merdeka Center, *Peninsula Malaysia Voter Opinion Poll*.
68. The approval rates for the prime minister, for example, fell between October 2007 and September 2008 among Malays from 84% to 51%, among Indians from 79% to 32%, and among Chinese from 47% to 30% (see Merdeka Center, *Peninsula Malaysia Voter Opinion Poll*).
69. Political analyst Abdul Razak Baginda, a close associate of Najib, was accused of abetting the 2006 murder of his former lover Altantuya, whose body was blown up with explosives. Raja Petra Kamaruddin has repeatedly linked Najib and his wife to the murder on his website *Malaysia Today*. Raja Petra was later detained (*Malaysiakini*, October 31, 2008).
70. Since 1957 the constitution has been amended nearly 700 times. Amendments are necessary, for example, for the re-delineation of constituencies.
71. The fifth PKR congress 'in the fully air-conditioned Malawati stadium in Shah Alam' in November 2008 'was the most well-organised to date and reflective of the resources which are now at the opposition party's disposal' (Beh Lih Yi, 'Victory Glee'). Interviews with Din Merican (PKR), Petaling Jaya, August 13, 2008; and Tony Pua (DAP), Kuala Lumpur, August 14, 2008.
72. Van de Walle, 'Tipping Games', 84. See also Oon, *Tipping Points*.
73. *Malaysiakini*, May 17, 2008.
74. Van de Walle, 'Tipping Games', 84.
75. Interviews with Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad (PKR), Shah Alam, August 14, 2008; and Tony Pua (DAP), Kuala Lumpur, August 14, 2008.
76. Howard and Roessler, 'Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes', 366.
77. Brownlee, *Authoritarianism*, 8. Thus, when the PAS and the DAP boycotted the Batu Talam state by-elections in January 2007 and pondered boycotting the next national elections, BN politicians reacted angrily. The BN needs elections to legitimate its authority at all costs.
78. Howard and Roessler, 'Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes', 380.
79. 'Anwar had secured no serious defection from either the political or business elite following his dismissal', (Abbott, 'Internet, *Reformasi* and Democratisation', 98). Obviously, this still has not changed.
80. It was used against opposition politician Teresa Kok (DAP), blogger Raja Petra Kamaruddin ('Malaysia Today') and a *Sin Chew Daily* journalist.
81. This is because of his 'chameleon-like political career' (see Sim, 'Can we trust Anwar?'). Anwar belonged to the opposition until the early 1980s. He then switched to the UMNO and became the designated successor of Mahathir.
82. See Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 174ff.
83. This 'mechanism of entrapment suggests that citizens may be able to enforce responsiveness by exploiting regime vulnerabilities even if formal means of interest aggregation are subverted' (see Lyall 'Pocket Protests', 387).

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